

## **PINAL COUNTY PORTION OF THE GILA/PINAL CONSORTIUM**

### **Geography**

Pinal County officials must surely have a difficult time dealing with the county's multiple associations. For years Pinal County has been associated with Gila County as part of the Arizona District V planning area and the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG) for purposes of regional government planning. But in 1993, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget attached Pinal County to Maricopa County, and labeled the new entity the Phoenix-Mesa Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Pinal County was joined to Maricopa, because of all the commuting that occurs from the town of Apache Junction to Maricopa County, a fact validated by just-then-available detailed 1990 census data.

### **Population**

According to the most recent official population figures, produced by AZ DES, Census 2000 figures show 179,727 people reside in Pinal County. This resident population accounts for 3.5 percent of state of Arizona's total population. In the ten years since the 1990 census, Pinal County's population grew by 54.4 percent, or roughly 4.5 percent annually compared to the state as a whole which grew over 40 percent for the decade. Apache Junction is the largest city in the county, with an estimated population of 31,814. Casa Grande is the next largest and a close second, with an estimated population of 25,224.

### **Income**

According to data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis from 1990 to 1999, local total personal income in Pinal County increased 77 percent compared to the State's roughly 90 percent. On a per capita basis, the gain of 35.4 percent was 10.9 percent below the State's growth of 46.3 percent. Pinal County per capita income was \$16,563 in 1999, about 65.8 percent of the state average, down from 71 percent in 1990. Average earnings per job increased 5 percent in 1999, while the gain for the state was 4.1 percent. The average earnings per job was \$28,394 compared to \$31,307 for the state, or 90.7 percent of the state.

### **Labor Force**

The Pinal County labor force grew roughly 2.8 percent each year from 1995 to 2000. Pinal County employment figures grew slightly more, with an average annual increase of 2.9 percent. This affected the unemployment rate downward from 4.8 percent in 1995 to 4.2 percent in 2000.

### **Employment**

Total nonfarm jobs in Pinal County decreased by an 0.5 percent yearly average from 1995-2000. The largest growth occurred in the services industry, which had average yearly growth of 5.2 percent for the period. Trade and transportation, communications and public utilities also registered gains of 1.1 and 0.1 percent per year respectively. Mining and manufacturing lost employment at the rate of 18.1 and 3.7 percent per annum respectively.

Government is the largest employer in Pinal County with 13,875 jobs. Second and third are trade and services, which employ 7,675 and 7,400 respectively.

### **Growing and Declining**

For the year 2000, the largest industry job growth was experienced in management and public relations (+766 jobs), civic and social associations (+487 jobs), and groceries and related products (+459 jobs). The largest employment losses appeared in copper ores (-3,895 jobs), gasoline service stations (-205 jobs), and lumber and construction material (-165 jobs). For further details see the enclosed tables.

### **Forecast**

Research Administration is forecasting employment to grow 1.0 percent in PY 01-02 and another 2.6 percent in PY 02-03. Countywide unemployment is expected to decrease from the PY 00-01 rate of 4.1 percent to 4.0 percent in PY 01-02 and then to 3.9 percent in PY 02-03. Unemployment in the non-reservation areas is expected to descend slightly from the PY 00-01 rate of 3.7 percent to 3.6 percent in PY 01-02 and afterwards to 3.5 percent in PY 02-03.

The County's unemployment rate is among the lowest four of Arizona's rural counties, and will probably remain so. Its proximity to Maricopa County, and location between Arizona's two major urban counties give it a special advantage in support of development. The Arizona State Prison remains one of the area's largest employers, and will offer a large portion of the job opportunities that come available in Pinal County.

### **Issues of Concern**

- Drop in earnings per job figures
- Weak construction employment while the rest of the state does well
- Loss of the mining influence

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Research Administration, November 2001.